

# Hoosier Folklore

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**From Indiana and Neighboring States**

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# HOOSIER FOLKLORE

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## THE VITALITY OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE\*

By J. W. ASHTON

Some years ago at the meeting of the Western Folklore Conference in Denver, Professor Ernest Leisy of Southern Methodist University read a paper on "Folklore in American Literature" (it was subsequently published in *American Literature*, I believe). It was in effect a bibliography of works of standard American literature which had to one degree or another taken over folk themes or folk tales. It was an extensive and impressive list, indicating a wide variety of contacts between professional literature and that great body of popular belief, custom, and story which constitutes American folklore. It is not my purpose here to recapitulate or to summarize Professor Leisy's analysis. It is enough to point out that one of the surest marks of a living folk tradition is its ability to put its imprint on the learned literature of a nation. If American literature has never yet seen so excellent a blending of folklore and profound learning as are to be found in *The Fairy Queen* or in *Paradise Lost*, there is none the less a healthy feeling for popular belief and story in many of our outstanding works, from "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" or "Rip van Winkle" to "The Devil and Daniel Webster" or *The Green Pastures*. This is not a matter of literary influences in the technical historical sense, it should be understood, but it is rather a matter of a creative idea or spirit at work at the very center of American life which can be drawn upon and which enlivens and enriches our literature.

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\*This paper was read at the annual meeting, August 15, 1947.

Associated with this, of course, has been that interest in regionalism in literature which had a particular vogue during the thirties and a little earlier, but which is also a constant characteristic of a large section of American literature. As a political and social factor we have come to see fully the significance of the regional patterns of American life. We have been able to reject the derogatory statements about the humdrum uniformity of life from one end of the country to the other which used to be the stock of critics of this country. We are learning that however much of fundamental likeness there may be in the various areas of the country, there is the regional folklore which gives particular flavor to the area where it exists. It may be a turn for salty phrase, a talent for tall stories, a touch of mysticism or a combination of several qualities such as these which gives to a region its particular characteristics. And these are essentially aspects of the folklore of an area. You will understand, I am sure, that this is not to deny the fact that folklore too has its universal patterns, perhaps best exemplified in the motifs of the folktale.

Another contributing element to the liveliness of our folklore is the fact that so many foreign cultures have contributed to it. This kind of contribution has often been hampered by the tendency of the foreign born to feel sensitive about anything that smacks of the Old Country and hence to forget if possible or at least to be reticent about their native folklore. This process is often hastened by the second generation who by their own sensitiveness to "foreignness" increase the reticence of their parents. In spite of all this, however, American folklore has profited from the impact of other cultures, has been better able to withstand the impact of a technical and skeptical and pseudo-sophisticated culture because of the many strains of influence which it has enjoyed so steadily.

The real mark of vitality in folklore, however, is unquestionably its ability to go on reproducing itself, naturally and un-selfconsciously, and this is definitely characteristic of folklore in America. A good many years ago when I first became interested in this field of investigation and study, folklore was pretty widely looked upon as something that was to be collected in the Southern Appalachian Mountains or among the American Indians in a hurry since it was already dying out and in the course of a relatively short time was likely to



be no longer existent. By and large, ballads, for instance, were thought of as survivals from a culture that had nearly died out. They were memorials of a vanished or vanishing past. Folktales had been embalmed a century or so ago by the Brothers Grimm and were no longer of living significance. They were all fossils out of early ages, interesting as fossils are to geologists and perhaps valuable as records of man's earlier thinking and creation, but hardly valid documents of contemporary life. More extended study in the intervening years, however, has testified to the living quality of our folklore, its continuing regeneration and its constant relationship to many aspects of our life. With the development of this understanding has gone the development of interest in folk arts like music and painting, and we are just beginning to see how rich has been their influence on our civilization, how much they are steadily contributing to richness in our culture.

The means of this continuing renewal of folk culture are of course many, as they have always been. People still sing as they work, though it is true that the tendency is to turn on the radio and make a noise instead. And among humble people the songs are still often those which have been handed down to them traditionally even though the songs still are found in some hymnal from the Moody and Sankey revivals or had their origin in some sentimental (or comic) song of minstrel show or vaudeville turn of an earlier generation. Notorious criminals still may be the subject of ballads, like one about Clyde Barrows, which was apparently sung about the time of his death.

There is also a large body of stories, often apparently created for a particular purpose (like the Paul Bunyan stories, perhaps), which come into being as full fledged folk stories in a remarkably short time. The most striking of these at the moment is perhaps the story of "The Vanishing Hitch-hiker," some further examples of which appeared in the last issue of *Hoosier Folklore*. On the way to joining the company of such stories is the one which had some currency a few years ago and dealt with a hitch-hiker disguised as a woman. I was amused to read recently in Wyoming in a clipping with a Los Angeles date line an account of the discovery of a cave in California containing mummified bodies dating back 80,000 years. They were, according to the report,

found in a kind of ceremonial room with decorations resembling those of Masonic lodges, and the figures were those of giants. It is a good illustration of the old adage that if you want to tell a lie, you ought never to give too many or too positive details. This story is not as yet a folktale, but it has all the elements to make a good one.

There is also the turn for proverb making, which is not to be confused with mere "folksy" speech, but which represents the statement of a fact or, it may be, an opinion, by a vigorous shortcut that intensifies the meaning by its overtones (to mix my figure badly). We think of these ordinarily as being pretty well set and thoroughly traditional, but actually they are being created all the time. Sometimes they are modern variations of older ones: "Familiarity breeds contempt—and children"; "Don't count your chips until the game is over." Some are close to the soil: "As classy as a sow with side pockets"; "He has no more sense than a June bug in a hailstorm." And there is a whole cycle of statements dealing with booby prizes for unsuccessful (usually half-hearted) efforts. The most favorable of them is "He wins the ruby cuff links," but there is a large group which is essentially vituperative.

"She wins the rubber-tired corset."

"He wins the barbed-wire drawers."

"He wins the busted mustache cup."

"He wins the concrete pants."

Beside which "That takes the fried egg" (or the "cold fried egg") pales into insignificance.

I leave untouched that great body of teen age slang and the even greater vocabulary of jive and the specialized lingo of armed forces, soda fountains, and the like, which have been studied recently by John L. Riordan and published in the *CFQ*. They all testify to the richness of this particular aspect of folklore.

Apparently one of the most fertile sources for popular beliefs and fancies (they are hardly superstitions in any technical sense) is high school youngsters, whose ingenuity in developing such beliefs is stimulated by an increasing interest in the opposite sex. Along with the desire to know who will be the future mate goes also a great interest in the kind of luck that is represented by wish fulfillment. While



apparently some beliefs continue from generation to generation, it is clear that there are changes from time to time in the bases which adolescents use for divining the future. The following examples have been largely contributed by my two daughters and represent some pretty well established customs of eastern Kansas and southern Indiana. Apparently there are only minor differences between the two areas.

Of all the wishing formulas which were popular twenty-five or thirty years ago, the only one which I have found regularly recurring is that of wishing on a star, with the usual formula:

Star light, star bright  
First star I see tonight  
I wish I may, I wish I might  
Have the wish I wish tonight.

As far as I can learn, however, this formula is no longer restricted by the necessity of looking at the first star, then looking away and not looking at it again until one had seen another star. In Maine thirty years ago to have looked a second time on the first star without in the meanwhile having seen another would have broken the wish.

There are other wish patterns, too.

If your eyelash comes off, put it on your finger and blow it away, making a wish as you do so. (It is possible that sometimes the effectiveness of the wish depended on the way in which the eyelash then behaved, but my informants were vague on this point.)

When you are served a square of butter, if you cut off a corner of the square as soon as it is served, you can make a wish and it will come true.

More complicated is the proper procedure when two people say the same thing at the same time. Then they should hook their little fingers (either right or left hand) and go through the following dialogue:

A	B
Needles	Pins
Triplets	Twins
When a man marries	His troubles begin
When a man dies	His troubles end
What goes up?	Smoke
What comes down?	Santa Claus

whereupon each makes a wish and they pull their little fingers. The one who is able to pull away from the other with finger still crooked will get her wish.

On concrete pavements there is sometimes an octagonal stamp imprinted by the contractor who laid the pavement. If you step on one of these, say 1, 2, 3, and make a wish on 3, your wish will come true. (This is somewhat akin to the older belief that if you stumbled as you were walking along the sidewalk you should go back to the object on which you had stumbled, step on it, kiss your thumb, and make a wish.)

A few have to do with smoking. If for instance you take the first cigarette from a package, you should make a wish on it. Or if you step on an empty Lucky Strike package, you may make a wish on it. Testimony to the power of advertising or something of the sort is given by the fact that it must be this particular brand of cigarette, no other. Of that I was assured emphatically.

The most complicated of all of these are the Padiddles. A one-eyed automobile is a padiddle. (I can not explain the term nor justify the spelling except phonetically.) The formula was first quite simple: see a car with one light, say "padiddle," kiss your thumb and stamp it in your palm; on the third one within a single day you could make a wish.<sup>1</sup> But now it is considerably more complicated. In its latest form it has these details: count fifty one-eyed cars; turn twenty rings;<sup>2</sup> count seven girls in purple (or lavender) dresses, or seven red headed boys; then the first boy who asks the girl a question will be the one that she will marry. To anyone beyond high school age and interests it hardly seems worth the trouble!

There are others that deal with the question of a future husband. Almost infallible, according to popular report, is the use of a piece of pie. You should cut in it as soon as it is served the initials of a person from whom you want a letter (or whom you would like to marry). Then cut off the tip and turn the plate around three times; eat your pie without speaking, the tip last. Then speak only when questioned thereafter. You will get the letter or the husband.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. William Jansen has pointed out to me that this is probably derived from the older practice of counting white horses and wishing on them.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to turning a ring on the finger.



Now soda straws have taken the place of daisies for learning if one is beloved. Squeeze the straw at the bottom with the thumb and first finger of the left hand, then immediately above with the fingers of the right hand and so on alternately to the top of the straw, with each squeeze spelling out the beloved's name and, when that is finished, going on with "He loves me; He loves me not. . . ." That being done, the process can be repeated with this formula (presumably on another straw): "Kiss, date, letter, call." And a third straw treated the same way will indicate as one names the days of the week, on what day this will happen.

Finally, if one burns a match completely and there is no red tip at the end, it is a sign that he still loves you.

These are samples of only a few of the many ways in which folklore underlies our experiences even in so highly sophisticated a world as we like to think ours is. We are amused at times and yet at the same time we as folklorists recognize how significant even these often trivial details become in the pattern of a developing culture. They are a part of the endless process of understanding people, of seeing why we are as we are.

Indiana University

Bloomington, Indiana

# WATER WITCHING

By LELAH ALLISON

Water witching is not new, and, no matter where one goes, he will find someone who can witch water in that community. The methods used are almost the same, but there are certain techniques which differ. A small fork from a green tree with the limbs long enough so that the fork can be held upside down over one's head with the ends held in each hand seems to be the method accepted by all who have the power of locating water underground. Other than that, each witcher has his own method.

Southern Illinois has many wells which have been dug at places which have been designated by a water witch. Other regions have many such wells also, but the methods herein described are those used by southern Illinois water witches.

John Todd Spruell of Wayne County likes a fork from a live peach tree, but he can use a fork from any tree, so long as the tree is alive. That is the term meant when a green tree is referred to. He cuts the fork from the tree just below the point where the limbs branch. He then trims the limbs, leaving them long enough to turn the fork upside down over his head and hold on to the ends of the limbs with each hand. The remainder is cut off from the ends of the limbs. He holds the fork in front of the body with the apex of the V extending away, grasps the end of each limb in each hand, and raises the arms up to each side of the head so that the limb is over the head. The witcher is now in position to walk about until he feels the force of an underground stream pulling on the fork.

He walks back and forth across a lot or field in which the owner would like to have a well, to see if the fork will pull downward. If there is no feeling of "pull" on the fork, there is no water underground in that area. If the owner is insistent on digging a well, especially at a dry time when he must have water for his stock, he selects the next desired lot or field in which the witch walks back and forth until he is sure that he has covered all the territory. When he feels the fork pulling downward, he walks back and forth until he locates the exact spot at which there is a stream of water underground. He then turns each way and follows the vein of water so that the most desired spot can be located for the owner.



To locate a vein is not enough, he must be able to tell the power of the underground stream. If there is a heavy pull on the fork, there is much water. If the pull is slight, the vein is a small one. The owner will not locate his well at that point.

As the witch approaches the vein, the fork begins to pull downward. At the point at which he stands directly over the vein the apex of the stick will point directly downward. He approaches the vein at right angles from both directions to be sure that he has located the exact spot. When that is located, it is easy to follow the vein toward its source and toward its destination.

After he has located the vein and estimated its strength, he estimates the depth by walking back at right angles until he feels the first pull on the fork. He then walks to the vein counting the feet. That is the number of feet it will be necessary for the owner to dig to find a good supply of water. Mr. Spruell says that he has witched dozens of wells in several counties of southern Illinois, and that there has always been water at the spot he has designated, when the owner has dug, and the depth of the water has never missed but a few feet of the measurement he has foretold.

Al Snowdell, now of Iowa but a native of Edwards County, Illinois, says that any green fork will serve, but he likes a peach fork. His method is the same except for the means of locating the depth. After he locates the vein and its direction and force of water supply, he estimates the depth by standing over the vein. Holding the fork in position in front of his body, he counts the number of times that it is pulled downward, each time turning it back, of course. The number of times that it is pulled down is the number of feet to the water.

He says that he witched wells in the panhandle of Oklahoma, which was so dry that settlers left their homes to move back to regions where water was plentiful. He says one well he witched in that dry region was strong enough to keep a deep pond filled for a rancher's herd of cattle and that a large windmill pumped that water twenty-four hours a day. He witched many wells in southern Illinois before he felt the urge to move westward. He has also used the fork in southwestern Iowa, where he now lives.

John Mossbarger used to witch wells, if he were asked to do so; but he did it with a sly grin on his quiet face. He in-

sisted on using a peach fork, but it had to be green. He estimated the depth of the water by the force of the "pull" on the stick.

This method sounds fantastic, but it is surprising how common is the use of these and other water witches when a landowner wants to dig a well. If he spends money to dig a well, he wants a supply of water. He needs water, or he would not go to the bother and expense of digging a well. In order to be sure that his venture is successful, he asks a water witch to come to his farm and use his power to locate the hidden stream that can supply the needed liquid. He may do it on the sly when he asks the water witch to come, but the latter is almost sure to point to the well, when it is done, as another of his "finds."

The owner may give the man a dollar or two for his trouble. The witcher likes to show his power and tell what he located.

Water witching has turned into another type of witching in southern Illinois. Some have used their power to locate the hidden pools of oil common in much of that area—which is more sought than water. It is doubtful whether they can say that they never failed to locate the source of the hidden "black gold."

Ellery, Illinois

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(There are many references to water witching in folklore publications. Indiana readers may be interested in knowing that the *Indiana Farmer's Guide*, a well-known farm weekly published at Huntington, Indiana, published a series of letters, pro and con, several years ago—in 1943, I believe.—The Editor.)



# FOLKLORE FROM SOCORRO, NEW MEXICO

By DOROTHY J. BAYLOR

The following stories are a selection from *Socorro Folklore*, a mimeographed publication of the English III Class of Socorro High School, under the direction of Dorothy J. Baylor. The collecting was done in the first semester of the school year 1946-47.—The Editor.

## I. GHOST STORIES

### 1. *Indian Ghost as Flower*

Told in Spanish to Eloisa Martinez by her father.

There were three brothers who were sent by their dad to camp. While there the two elder brothers were so envious of their younger brother that they killed him and buried him up there. No one knew about him or heard of him again.

One day an Indian who was roaming around was attracted by a flower—a beautiful flower. This flower happened to be on top of the grave of the buried man. This Indian cut it and smelled it. When he was smelling it, the flower talked to him. It said that he was killed at camp and that he should talk to him with sorrow. The Indian took this flower to the chief and the flower said the same thing to him. The chief had all the town people over and he passed this flower to all. When the flower was passed to the two brothers, it said something different. It said that they should talk to it with sorrow for they had killed him. This is how it was revealed that the two brothers had killed the younger brother.

### 2. *Headless Woman*

Told to Betty Matlock by Mrs. Ella Matlock.

There is a place near a lake in Texas that a headless woman walks every night between ten and eleven o'clock. Some boys were there one night and they saw her and ran home, telling others about it. Some men didn't believe it, so they went there. They waited around awhile and finally their horses started cutting up and trying to get away. They looked up and saw a woman coming down the path and disappearing into the trees. They were so scared they couldn't stay, and neither could their horses.

### 3. *Ghost Takes Man*

Contributed by Aguinaldo Baca.

This story was told by an old man who died several years ago. He used to say that when he was in his fifties he used to ride a horse almost every day. There were always two persons with him, his two best friends.

He claimed that almost every day, for two weeks, while he and his companions were passing through a wooded path they would see a ghost in front of them. They could not make out what it was, for it was covered from head to foot. He ran about fifty feet in front of the horses, and the riders could never catch up with him. Later one of the three men died. The other two claimed that the ghost was his guarding angel and had been trying to take him. He had never had the chance until that night when the man was alone.

### 4. *Priest Returns because of Unfinished Masses*

Told by Sister Melitina to Joe Armijo.

A priest made a promise that if his wish came true he would go to the church at midnight and say some prayers. It so happened that he got his wish. That night he went to the church and started saying his prayers. At the half of his prayers he looked up towards the altar; and, to his surprise, there stood a man dressed in priest's garments. He knew he had never seen this priest in his parish before, and he didn't recall anyone mentioning anything about a new priest coming to the parish. Then he noticed something peculiar about this new person standing before him; he could see through him. This made him so scared that he froze stiff. The intruder moved closer to the frightened priest and said in a faraway tone, "Do not be afraid; what you are thinking is true. I am a ghost. I would like to ask of you a favor, but first let me tell you the reason for my being here. Some years ago I made a promise to give twenty masses; and, in case I never lived to complete my promise, I vowed to come back and finish. I've been coming every night, for some number of years, but I haven't found anyone to serve mass for me yet. Tonight you happened to come, and now I want to ask you to do this favor for me."

The priest served the mass. Next morning priests asked him about it and he told them about the night before.



### 5. *Ghost Prepares Breakfast*

This is the story told by a man about his wife who had just died. They had buried her that afternoon and all that night he dreamed about her. About two o'clock in the morning he woke up and went into the kitchen. There he saw his wife cooking breakfast for him. Neither was able to speak to the other. All he could do was watch her till she cooked his breakfast, after which she walked out. She headed straight for the graveyard. He tried his best to catch up with her, but he never could. As she arrived at the graveyard, she disappeared. Very unhappy, he returned to the house where his breakfast stood in the same place his wife left it. Next morning he told his friends all about it. He claims that his wife left something unfinished and returned to have it done or that probably she meant to tell him something before she died and never had the chance.

### 6. *Ghostly Return because of Unfulfilled Promise*

Told in Spanish by Lucia Ortiz to Tom Crespin.

When my aunt was about 10 years old her aunt promised to give my aunt a fryer and a pullet whenever her baby chicks grew up. My aunt was always helping her aunt with the chickens.

One night my aunt and a Mrs. Chavez went to their friend's house, which was about a quarter of a mile away. My aunt was never afraid in her life, but this particular night she was very much afraid on the way up and back. When my aunt and Mrs. Chavez were coming back home, my aunt saw a light in the house. My aunt went in the house and saw her aunt sitting next to the fireplace. There wasn't any light in the room. My aunt talked to her aunt sitting next to the fireplace, but she didn't respond. They locked the door and went to the kitchen. When Mr. Chavez came from town, he told them that my aunt's aunt had died that night. They went over to see if there was anybody in the room that my aunt and Mrs. Chavez had locked. There wasn't anybody there. They went in the kitchen where they sat eating some candy. As my aunt turned around, she saw her aunt. Then my aunt remembered about the fryer and the pullet that her aunt had promised and told her that she need not bother to give her the fryer and the pullet. From then on she never bothered my aunt any more.

### 7. *Ghost Attends Dance*

Told to Lucy Padilla by her sister Jackie Padilla.

A girl in a beautiful white gown attended a dance two years ago. This girl was different from any other girl at the dance. She was pale and had a frozen look.

A service boy spotted her and later asked her to dance. They danced together all night long. The girl didn't talk unless the boy asked questions.

After the dance was over the boy took her home. Because she was so cold and stiff, he lent her his jacket. When they neared a graveyard the girl said, "This is where I live. If you want your jacket go over to my house for it. You know where I live." She then disappeared. The boy stood motionless and knew that she must have been a ghost. He returned to camp very frightened.

Next morning he decided to go for his jacket. He asked the girl's mother for his jacket. The lady was puzzled and thought maybe he was crazy. The boy said, "Your daughter borrowed my jacket last night."

She said, "I have no daughter. I did have one, but she's been dead for five years."

The boy was very much frightened because the mother told him to go to the grave and that maybe he would find his jacket there. He went, and there it was spread over the grave. The service boy couldn't believe this. He told his buddies about it, but nobody believed him.

This news spread around soon. To find out they dug her up, and she was just the way she had appeared at the dance, and the way they had buried her. Her orchid was even fresh.

This is true, and many people who attended the dance saw her.

Afterward this boy didn't attend any dances for fear that this girl should reappear.

### 8. *Ghost at Dance*

Told to Joe Garcia by his grandmother.

This is about a boy who liked a girl very much. This girl died some time ago, and the boy didn't know it. One night the boy went to a dance and saw the girl there. He went over and talked to her. Then he danced with her; and while he was dancing with her, he noticed that her body was cold. When they got through dancing, the boy went to a friend of his



and told him to dance with her and see if he noticed anything about her. He came and told him the same thing, that her body was cold. Then the boy decided that he would give her his coat so she wouldn't be so cold. She said she wasn't cold, but she put on his coat. After the dance he took her home. The next day he went for his coat at her mother's house, but the girl's mother didn't know anything about a coat. The boy told her that he had accompanied her daughter to this house. The lady said that her daughter was dead. The boy said she couldn't be because he brought her home that night before. She took him to the grave to prove it to him, and there they found the coat on the top of the grave.

9. *Ghost Haunts Murderess*

Contributed by Marion Esquivel.

Not long ago a lady murdered an old man. She is now in prison. Her daughter claims that she can not eat nor sleep, and that every time she tries to eat or sleep she can see the man everywhere she goes; that he follows her.

10. *Ghost Sounds*

In an old haunted house on the 85 Highway about twelve o'clock at night you can hear the rattle of bottles and then the wails of a lonely woman. The explanation to this is that many years ago a couple lived in this house very happily until one night about twelve the man went down to the wine cellar to set a mouse trap. While going down the stairs he tripped and fell and hit the table leg with his head and knocked some bottles on the floor. Then his wife, hearing the noise, ran downstairs and found her husband dead. That is why you can hear these sounds in the still of the night.

11. *Ghostly Protest*

Told to Dorris Olsen by her grandfather, Mr. W. L. Jones.

When my grandfather was a small boy, he went to Oregon from Texas in a covered wagon with his brother. On their first night out they camped under a huge tree by the side of the road. They found a place in the ground where it had sunk down about six inches, and they decided to sleep there. During the night they heard moans and groans, and they heard someone saying, "Get off of me." They thought it was just the wind in the trees; so they went back to sleep. The next morning when they got up they found that they had been sleeping on top of a Negro's grave. He swears the story is a true one.

## II. STORIES OF SUPPOSED GHOSTS

12. *Ghost Chains*

Told by Jack Bruton.

There was a haunted house, and at the same time each night a noise was heard. It sounded like a chain being dragged up and down the stairs. The mystery was solved by a brave man. The man slipped up to a window when he heard the dreadful noise. As he shined the flashlight on the stairway he saw a 'possum with a steel trap on his foot. The 'possum was slowly making his way up the stairs.

13. *Cow as Ghost*

Told to Jack Bruton by Mrs. Jack Bruton.

A lady I know quite well told me this story and claims it to be true.

The family had just finished their supper when one of the children started screaming and pointing to the door. There was something white standing there, and before their eyes it began to move. Everyone was afraid to go see what it was. After a while one of the men of the house got the shotgun and went to investigate the ghost. The ghost turned out to be the milk cow. The cow had a sheet hung on her horns, which proved she had been to the clothesline, not trying to scare anyone.

14. *Ghost Shadow*

Told to Jack Bruton by Deana Durham.

This incident was told to me by my aunt and is supposed to be quite true.

There was a cowboy staying at a ranch by himself, and the place was supposed to be haunted. The man was awakened in the middle of the night by the wind, which was blowing very hard. The door of his room was open, and a shadow of a gun and hand kept flashing on the door. The boy was scared and grabbed his gun and shot at the shadow everytime it showed itself on the door, but it kept coming back. After he had emptied his gun, he decided to find out what it was. Having reloaded his gun, he went outside and found that the gun shadow was a deerskin with a horn, nailed to the outer wall, and the wind was flapping it back and forth, throwing its shadow on the door.



*15. Ghost Answer*

Told to Dorris Olsen by Mrs. W. L. Jones.

One dark night as a drunk man was on his way home, he fell into a sunken grave beside the road. He was so drunk that he just stayed there. A few minutes later two men came riding by, and they stopped, and one man pointed to the sunken grave and said, "The meanest man in the world is lying there."

The drunk man in the grave raised up and said, "You're a big liar. I am not the meanest man in the world." The other two men started to run; and then when they came to their senses, they found that they were five miles away from home.

*16. Ghost Grip*

There was a funeral to be held one morning. They had brought white gloves to put on the dead man. No one would volunteer to put them on as they were all afraid. Finally a woman volunteered. She opened his hand to put the glove on him. His hand closed over her hand in a clasp. She believed he was still alive. She screamed and ran out of the room. The lady remained insane for the rest of her life.

### III. STORIES OF CURSES

*17. Girl Cursed to Crawl Like Snake*

Told by Esther Zimmerly to Barbara Stirling and Burdie Caldwell.

A lady in Socorro, when a girl of fourteen, got mad at her mother and slapped her. Her mother said that from the time of her death till her daughter's death, her daughter would never walk but have to crawl like a snake. This lady is still alive and goes around in a wheel chair.

*18. Death Alley*

Told by Mrs. Mires to Burdie Caldwell and Barbara Stirling.

Death Alley is now called Garfield Avenue. It got its name because of the many illegal hangings there. At one of these particular hangings the man said, "I place my curse on Socorro for this illegal hanging, and as long as anyone of you are alive this town will never prosper."

*19. Paralysis*

Told in Spanish to Marion Esquivel by E. E. Esquivel.

A man gave his son a whipping once for having done something wrong. Then the boy took out his knife and was about

to strike at his father when he found out he couldn't move his arm. His arm stayed in the air and the ground swallowed him up to the waist. They tried very hard to dig him out. Men from all around came to pull him out but without success. They called the priests and archbishops to come and pray for him. Everyone had given up hope. Then the boy himself promised that if he was to come up again he would go around and preach to the whole world and tell them about his experience and give advice to all.

20. *Dead Man Clings to Murderer*

Told to Barbara Stirling and Burdie Caldwell by Esther Zimmerly.

A boy and his father had a quarrel, and the father got mad and struck the boy. The boy swore he would get vengeance. He followed his father to work the next night. When they were quite a ways out of town, the boy picked up a rock and killed his father. In order to hide his crime he put his father over his shoulder and proceeded to take him and dump him in the river. When he got there he tried to free himself of the body but could not. His father's dead body clung to him. The boy had heart failure and died.

21. *Man Sees Skirts*

Contributed by Marion Esquivel.

A man who used to "step out" on his wife all the time decided that he would go out regardless of what his wife said about it. He said that no pair of skirts was going to tell him what to do. On the way that night everywhere he looked he could see a pair of skirts in front of him. He finally had to turn back.

#### IV. TALL TALES

22. *Homing Ducks*

Contributed by Michel Harriet.

A man once went to Las Cruces and bought some duck eggs. Then he came back to Socorro and had a hen hatch them. When the ducks got big, they flew back to Las Cruces to live.

23. *Lost Watch*

Contributed by Michel Harriet.

Once a man driving on a wagon to Kansas lost his watch. Six months later he came back on the same road and saw the watch lying on the road. He picked it up, and it was still running.



*24. Lost Watch*

Contributed by Michel Harriet.

Once a man lost his watch in a haystack. He looked for the watch, but he could not find it. Then he turned his pigs in to the hay, and one of the pigs found it and brought it to him.

*25. Snake Grows Back Together*

Contributed by Michel Harriet.

There was a man in this town that claimed this to be true. He saw a snake and cut it in half. Then he put one half into a hollow log. A year later he came back by the log and saw the same snake had grown back together and was much larger than before.

*26. Hoop Snake*

Told to Billie Caldwell by H. Peterson.

Once upon a time a hoop snake and a bull snake were having an argument about which one could run the fastest. They started to race. The hoop snake grabbed his tail in his mouth and made a hoop out of himself. He started to roll, and the bull snake started to run. There was a big army wagon at the bottom of a dry creek. When the hoop snake got there, he undoubled and stuck into the axle. He injected so much poison that in two minutes the wheel wouldn't roll.

*27. A Bear for a Mule*

Told to Jack Bruton by Michel Harriet.

Many years ago a man was headed for Kansas, and one night he hobbled his riding mule. Before daylight he went to his mule and rode on the way. When daylight came he found that he was riding a big bear.

*28. Up to the Ankles*

Contributed by Jack Bruton.

One time there were two Dutchmen hunting squirrels. They shot one in a tree, but it hung on some branches, and so one of the men climbed up the tree and fell out. The other ran to a nearby farmhouse to borrow a shovel. The farmer asked him what he wanted with the shovel. The Dutchman told him that his friend fell out of a tree and went ankle deep into the sand.

"He should be able to get out by himself if he went only up to his ankles," said the farmer.

"But sir," replied the Dutchman, "he went in head first."

*29. Reverse Grinding of a Pig*

Told to Jack Bruton by Michel Harriet.

Once a man decided that he would like to have sausage; so he killed a pig and ground it. After doing so, he decided he didn't like the sausage. So he just put it back into the grinder. After turning a few turns backward, out jumped the squealing pig.

*30. How to Catch Bears Without Weapons*

Contributed by Charlie Reynolds.

First get a bear to chase you and wait until he is about to catch you. Then turn around and kick him on the chin. When he opens his mouth in pain, you just run your hand through his throat and get hold of his tail. Then give a big jerk and turn him wrong side out. He is then skinned and dressed, and you still have your life.

Caution: Don't try this unless you are experienced at it.

*31. Duckhunting*

Told to Tom Crespín by Paul Downs.

Paul was always getting left without any ducks at duck season because he was late about going hunting and everybody else had killed all the ducks off. He thought that he would fool everybody this time; so he went down to the flats where there were lots of marshes and water. The weather was just right; so he sat down and hid.

He had very light birdshot and a double-barrel shotgun. He shouldn't have been hunting ducks with such light ammunition. All at once a duck came gliding in to land. He was anxious to get it; so he cut loose with both barrels. He hit the duck broadside. It didn't kill the duck, however, because it turned and flew back across the river which was very narrow at that point. On the other side another hunter saw it and cut loose with his gun, making the duck come back to Paul's side. He shot at it again, but still he didn't kill it. It just glided back to the other side. They played tennis with that duck for about an hour, until there was only a feather going back and forth.

Socorro High School

Socorro, New Mexico



# FOLKLORE OF THE HOME FRONT

By HOWARD H. PECKHAM

World War II began producing its folklore even while the war was being fought. Three examples of "home-front" folklore came to my attention in southern Michigan. Doubtless, they were duplicated in other parts of the country.

## 1. *The Specter of Additional Rationing*

As one item after another had to be rationed during the war, fear grew that eventually clothing would be rationed by coupons, as it was in England. From time to time the government denied that such rationing was contemplated, but little credit was given these statements. In the fall of 1944, a story reached a neighbor of ours in Ann Arbor that a friend of a friend living in Bloomfield Hills had lost her grocery ration book. She had made application for a new one, but received instead through the mail an entirely new book designed for clothes rationing! Here was positive evidence that the government was preparing to restrict the sale of clothing. The story gained such circulation in the Detroit area that a radio newscaster denied the whole yarn in his broadcast, the next night after the story reached us.

(I heard this same story about the same time, but the locale was Youngstown, Ohio.—The Editor)

## 2. *The War Monger Attacked*

This story was retold every few months, with a different setting. The first I heard concerned a group of women in a Detroit bakery. One of them remarked that she hoped the war would last a lot longer because she was earning more money than she ever had in her life. Whereupon one of the other customers purchases a lemon cream pie and throws it in her face. Later, I heard the same remark attributed to a worker at the Willow Run Bomber plant, whereupon one of his fellow workers knocked him down. Another time, the incident was reported to have happened on a Detroit bus, and the speaker was struck.

(I imagine that everyone has heard at least one variant of this story. The only one I recall, but which I heard a number of times is the one in which the war monger makes her statement on a bus. The driver puts her off—with strong remarks.—The Editor)

### 3. *The Accuser Rebuffed*

This incident was reported as having happened by a Detroit newspaper columnist, but it bears all the aspects of folklore. A woman boarded a crowded street car in Detroit and found herself standing next to a young man of draft age. After looking him over, she remarked that she had a son who had enlisted and was now fighting in Italy. As this produced little response, she asked loudly: "Why aren't you in uniform fighting for your country, instead of riding around town safely?" At this the young man turned on her. "Did your son fight at Salerno? Then ask him to look around and see if he can find the arm I lost there." Then he pulled the cord to get off and revealed one empty sleeve tucked into a pocket.

Indiana Historical Bureau                      Indianapolis, Indiana

(Mr. Peckham has asked me to add similar stories that I have heard. I can think of only two others at the moment. The first is the one about the young lady on the streetcar whose escort seemed overly solicitous, placing her cigarette in her mouth, lighting it for her, etc. Finally he did something uncommon—wiping her nose, I believe. At this another occupant—you know the type—snickered and made an audible remark. The young man then took the muff from the young lady's arms, revealing only stumps. He explained. "That's what the Japs did in a prison camp."

The second is also about a prison camp atrocity. I heard this from some of my pupils in Muncie, Indiana, very soon after Pearl Harbor. That was the only time I heard it, but Mrs. Baughman heard it in the closing days of the war, from an acquaintance in Bloomington.

A mother here in the United States heard from her son who had been captured by the Japanese in the very early stages of the war. His letter contained a glowing account of life in the prison camp. He praised the food, the quarters, the guards, and the Japanese in general. At the end of the letter was a request for her to save the stamps on all of his letters, since he wanted to have them for souvenirs when he returned. The mother steamed off the stamp and discovered a message written in the tiny space below the stamp: "They've cut my tongue out."

We hope that readers will send in variants of these stories and examples of other war folklore before they are completely forgotten.—The Editor)



## NOTES

Readers are invited to participate in this department by using it as a clearing house for folklore information of all kinds, to report variants of stories or songs or other material given in preceding issues, or to discover from other readers variants of unpublished lore that has been collected or remembered.

### FOLKLORE FROM RUSHVILLE, INDIANA

By A. L. GARY

1.

An aged justice of the peace held a trial; and after the evidence was in, the attorneys were discussing about the amount of time they wanted for the argument. The squire said, "You can take all of the time you want, but I'm writing my decision now."

2.

A young lawyer had his first client who wanted to know if a certain farm had a mortgage on it. The lawyer made a trip to the farm and reported that he didn't see any sign of a mortgage on it.

3.

A teacher in a country school directed her pupils to wipe their feet before coming into the schoolhouse. One boy took the order literally. He took off his shoes and wiped his feet, and put his shoes on and went into the schoolhouse.

4.

Continual rains caused grumbling among the farmers. One philosophical farmer said, "Boys, I have always noticed that this time of year if rain gets five minutes the start on you, you can't stop it to save your life."

5.

A country debating society was held in a district schoolhouse. The chairman thought they were killing time. He said, "If this thing doesn't stop, it's going to close."

6.

A lady president of her society entertained a motion. She said, "All in favor of that motion stand up or sit down."

7.

When natural gas was discovered in this community about 1890 and all farms were supplied with it, the housewives were

distressed over not having ashes to make lye for soap. One lady, better informed than the others, said, "Oh, that's all right; we can use consecrated lye."

## 8.

A man and his wife were calling on a neighbor and arose to leave, saying, "We must go," then stopping to gossip further, then saying, "We must go," until a young son was exasperated and said, "Are you going now or are you going to wait and go now?"

## 9.

A boy in the country had company. He heard a train whistle. He said, "There's the train; its a freight or passenger, one or the other; I can tell by the whistle."

Rushville, Indiana

### HOOSIER DIALECT QUERY

By CAROLINE DUNN

An inquiry recently came to the Indiana Historical Society Library from the *Chicago Tribune*, through Chester W. Cleveland, editor of the *Magazine of Sigma Chi*, asking what historical background we could give for the Indiana idiom "chincy" which they were led to believe meant stingy. We did not find the expression in any of the Indiana word lists here (We do not have Paul G. Brewster's two articles in *American Speech*, 14(4), Dec. 1939, pp. 261-268; and 16(1), Feb. 1941, pp. 21-25). Nor had most people whom I asked ever heard the expression. However, two librarians attending a summer course given by the State Library immediately recognized it. Mrs. Nelle N. Holder, Dugger, says that "chincy" is an expression coming to her from her childhood, as a person stingy and selfish. She heard it around Green County. The other, Miss Helen Hayes, Clinton, has heard it around Clinton, with same meaning but slightly different pronunciation, "chinchy". The expression is listed in Harold Wentworth's *American Dialect Dictionary*, (1944), p. 110, with listings from Virginia, Arkansas, and Southern United States.

William Henry Smith Memorial Library

Indianapolis, Indiana

## NOTES AS I READ

(*Hoosier Folklore*, Vol. V, No. 4; Vol. VI, No. 1)

By GRACE PARTRIDGE SMITH

The last two issues of *Hoosier Folklore* have reached me here in Washington, D. C. I have read each number with interest and am now transcribing to paper the mental notes I made while going through these pages. Thinking such a report may be enjoyed by your readers, I jot down below items apropos of some of the articles contained in the issues indicated above, thereby accepting your editor's invitation to report variants of songs, stories, and other material given in preceding issues. I begin with Volume V, Number 4 as follows:

## 1.

"Some Turkish Folktales," set down by Turkish students at Indiana University shows what a wealth of traditional tales may be gleaned from a project such as that initiated by Professor Jansen. Similar student responses elsewhere have, I know, added materially to the instructor's collection of stories and superstitions. A comparison of the tales about the Hodscha Nasreddin, reported by the students in question, with a standard text<sup>1</sup> shows clearly the many changes that occur in stories told again.

I should like to contribute variants for Number 17 ("Happiness") on page 145 of the same article. This is the luck-bringing-shirt motif (N 135.3). For variants: Esthonian and Livonian by Dr. J. Hurt and Oscar Loorits respectively, but I have not had the opportunity to examine them. Further, C. Fillingham Coxwell, *Siberian and Other Folk Tales* (London, 1925) 844-845 ("The Tsar and the Shirt"—after V. Lafeen); Hans Christian Andersen, "Lykken's Galocher"; John Hay, *The Complete Poetical Works of John Hay* (Boston, 1916) 52-56 ("The Enchanted Shirt"); Edwin Markham, *The Shoes of Happiness and Other Poems* (Garden City, 1915) 9-29 ("The Shoes of Happiness").

## 2.

In the article by W. Edson Richmond, "The Collection of Proverbs in Indiana," there is an appeal for help in gathering

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Wesselski, *Der Hodscha Nasreddin*, 2 vols. (Weimar, 1911). Cf. also Reinhold Köhler, *Kleinere Schriften*, 3 vols. (Weimar, 1938) I, 481-509.



together that state's proverbs for representation in a dictionary of proverbs projected by the American Dialect Society. I am taking this opportunity to report that many of Indiana's pithy expressions, proverbs, similes, and the like are now reposing in the files of the Folklore Division in the Library of Congress. This unedited material is included in the leftovers from the WPA Federal Writers' Project which was abandoned in 1941. The material is now available in its permanent repository and he who runs may read. Your Society should certainly delegate someone to copy these bits.<sup>2</sup> You may be interested in a few examples I have noticed in the files:

- a. Thick as three in a bed and one in the middle.
- b. Sour as whiggy.
- c. Awkward as a cow with a crutch.
- d. Boasters are cousins to liars.
- e. One hour today is worth two tomorrow.

3.

On page 163 (same issue) is a note, "A Question of Weather Lore," in which the contributor mentions what he considers an inconsistency in my article, "Folklore from 'Egypt'" (*Hoosier Folklore*, June, 1946). One or two examples of "inconsistencies" in folklore that I have happened upon recently seem to me to indicate that the folk have no set forms for their sayings and superstitions, but pattern them by experience. Note the following contradictions:

a. In Norfolk, Virginia, they say that if you see the new moon through leaves over your *right* shoulder, your luck will be bad; if you see the same moon in a clear space and over your *left* shoulder, make a wish and it will come true. (Reported by a Worker in the Federal Writers' Project; filed in the Folklore Division of the Library of Congress. This excerpt used with permission).

b. In France, in the maritime provinces, the folk beliefs concerning the time of death differ. Cf. Paul Sébillot, *Le Folk-Lore des Pêcheurs* (Paris, 1901) 62: "En Basse-Bretagne, les malades souffrent plus à la mer montante qu'à tout autre moment et c'est alors qu'il meurt le plus de gens; une croyance

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<sup>2</sup> This suggestion is made with the approval of Dr. Duncan Emrich, Head of the Folklore Division of the Library of Congress, and examples are given with permission.

opposée existe aux environs de Saint-Malo; lorsqu' un pêcheur est malade, il attend le reflux pour mourir."

c. In her "Nebraska Snake Lore" (*Southern Folklore Quarterly*, September, 1946), Dr. Louise Pound reports (p. 159) "It is good luck to kill the first snake you see in the spring," and "It is good luck *not* to kill the first snake you see in the spring." And (p. 171) "If you kill a snake, it will not die until *sundown*;" "If you kill a snake, it will not die until *sunrise*." The italics are mine.

4.

I pass on to the issue of March, 1947. There is much of interest in the article, "Folklore at a Milwaukee Wedding." I take the space to jot down a few remarks on items in this report:

a. The story of the soldier in the graveyard (p. 5) is, of course, not solely German, for variants are reported from other lands. For some time, I have been collecting versions of this particular story. Some of your readers may wish to add the following to their own lists if they do not already have them: Dr. Bertram, *Sagen vom Ladogasee*, Helsingfors, 1872 (page reference not available); Marie Bonnet, "Le Fuseau" in *Revue des traditions populaires*, XXVII (1912) 80ff.; Otto Busch, *Nordwestthüringer Sagen* (Mülhausen, 1926) 32,179; Charles Neely, *Tales and Songs of Southern Illinois* (Menasha, Wisc., 1938) 64-67. A story, "The Cemetery Path," appeared in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, November 29, 1941. In later issues of this periodical, several persons reported the story—one, from Argentina; two others, from Kentucky.

b. "The Wrong Man Thrown Off" (p. 10) reminds me of a song popular in the mid-1890's, entitled, "Put Me Off at Buffalo," sung in vaudeville by the Dillon Brothers. The song and the story are built on the same idea. The text is reprinted in *Lost Chords* by Douglas Gilbert (New York, 1942) 234-235. It is amusing to compare the two. The last line of the song is, "I've put the *wrong* man off the train at Buffalo."

5.

Returning, in closing, to the December, 1946, issue, the author of the article, "The Hanging of Sam Archer," suggests that a number of ballads on the crimes and tragedies enacted in Indiana might be salvaged with time and energy. At long

distance, I am keeping this in mind as I examine the WPA material from the Indiana Project in the hopes I may find such ballads there. So far, I have not completed the search. The amount of balladry in this file is a fair omen for such discovery.

Washington, D. C.

### THE TALKING HORSE

By BERNARD COHEN

Contributed to Mr. Cohen, November, 1945, by Ernie F. Postlewaite, who heard it from Bud Granger, a member of the San Francisco Seals, a professional baseball club.

The Dodgers were playing an important game with the Giants. First the Dodgers and then the Giants were in the lead. "Lippy" Durocher was walking back and forth. After all, it was almost the end of the season, and every game counted more than percentages showed. About the seventh inning, with the score tied, a horse strolled up and tapped Durocher on the shoulder. "Hey, Lippy," he said, "why don't you send me in? I can bat." Durocher glanced up and snarled, "Go away and don't bother me. I'm having enough troubles."

Now it was the last half of the eighth inning, and the Dodgers went out in the field. One of the players made an error, and the Giants scored again. Finally the Dodgers came to bat. It was their last chance, and Durocher had reached a state of bad nerves. The horse came trotting up again. "Come on, Lippy; let me go in. What can you lose? The chances aren't very good and I am." Durocher showed his teeth in a snarl. "You irritate me. Go peddle your milk like a good boy." The horse sadly walked away.

The first man up flied out and Durocher became desperate. He stood up and yelled at the horse, "Hey you, come over here! You might as well try it." The horse came trotting out and stepped up to the batter's box. The first pitch was low and wide for a ball. The second was a perfect pitch, and the horse took a swing at it. He connected, full force, and the ball flew into the stands for a home run. Durocher started jumping up and down, and waving his arms. "Run, you fool; don't just stand there." The horse turned around and laughed. "Don't be silly. If I could run, I wouldn't be playing baseball."

Indiana University

Bloomington, Indiana



### CADENCE COUNTS

There have been several replies to a query by Frances J. Baughman about cadence counts (see *HF* 6:78). These replies indicate that the counts are widespread and varied.

#### Illinois

Left—  
 Left—  
 Left my wife in  
 Starving condition and  
 Nothing but johnnycakes  
 Left—  
 Left . . .

From Eva H. McIntosh, Carbondale, Illinois.

#### Minnesota

Left! Right! Left—Left—  
 I left my wife  
 And seventeen children  
 In starving condition  
 With nothing but  
 Johnnycake left.  
 Was I right—  
 Was I right when I left?  
 I left my wife, etc, *da capo*, *ad inf.*

From Leslie Dae Lindau, Colorado State College of Education, Greeley, Colorado, who heard it about thirty years ago.

#### Indiana

##### 1.

Miss Caroline Dunn learned this one in a Girl Scout troop about the time of World War I.

Left, Left  
 Left a wife and forty-six children.  
 Don't you think that I had a  
 Right, right?

##### 2.

This one Miss Dunn learned from Sue White, who remembers it from high school days, four or five years ago.

Left, Left  
 I left my wife and twenty-one kids  
 Back home in bed in a starving condition  
 Without any gingerbread  
 Left, Left.

First I hired her  
Then I fired her  
Then, by golly  
She left,  
Left, left . . .

## 3.

About this one Miss Dunn remarks: "We liked this one for keeping step and regarded it as a little wild because of the 'swear words' in it."

Keep step, keep step,  
Keep step, gosh darn it, keep step.  
You've got it, now keep it,  
Don't lose it, doggone it,  
Keep step, doggone it, keep step.

From Miss Caroline Dunn, William Henry Smith Memorial Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

## 4.

Paul G. Brewster says he remembers using this one during the first World War. The "hayfoot, strawfoot," he adds, comes from Civil War days when green country recruits often did not know their right feet from their left. The drill sergeants had them tie hay to their left feet and straw on their right feet.

Hayfoot, strawfoot  
Belly full of bean soup  
Left—  
Left—  
Left my wife  
And fourteen children.  
Did I do right—  
Right—  
Right when I left?

From Paul G. Brewster, Bloomington, Indiana.

## ABOUT THE DEATH OF PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT

By ERNEST W. BAUGHMAN

At the time of the recent Hoosier Folklore Society meeting, Mr. David S. McIntosh, one of our regional editors, remarked that there are stories still current about the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. I remembered a few, and we began comparing notes.

I remember now that in the summer of 1945 I learned with some surprise and some amusement that there was considerable speculation about the cause of death and even some speculation as to whether the late president was even dead at all.

Probably the wildest story of all was that President Roosevelt and Adolph Hitler were hiding out together in some remote section, in South America I believe, and that when they had all their arrangements made, they would return and by surprise take over the whole world.

Another supposition, emanating from Denver, Colorado, concerned an artist who was working on the portrait of the President just before the time of his death. "Now this artist was a Russian, and the whole thing was a plot engineered by Stalin!"

Herbert Hamilton, of Muncie, Indiana, when I asked him about the situation, replied that there were several rumors circulating in the U. S. Army in Bavaria, where he was stationed in 1945. One was that the President had committed suicide. This was usually explained by his disappointment over betrayal by Russia. Another story was that he had actually died several months before the announced date of death and that his place had been taken by a double. Evidence for this theory was that his radio voice for the few months before the death announcement had sounded unlike that of the President and that his coffin had not been opened for inspection during any of the time his body lay in state.

The story Mr. McIntosh had heard was an elaboration of the suicide theory—that several days before his death he had gone to the highest mountain in the vicinity of Warm Springs and had sent everybody away for awhile, saying he wanted to be alone with his God. "Maybe he took a pill up there and it didn't work till a couple of days later."

This summary is enough to show the speculation in some quarters about an event of great importance in an over-



wrought world. This material could probably be analyzed to prove any number of things. It is not at all surprising, I think, that these rumors should have been current of a man about whom partisan feeling assumed the proportions it did. Here we have the beginnings, at least, of a Roosevelt death legend. How widespread is it at the present time? How many other stories were current? This might be a fertile field of inquiry. Let us know what you have heard or what you are able to find out.

Indiana University

Bloomington, Indiana

### SAFETY PINS FOR PEELING ONIONS

By CAROLINE DUNN

Lucille Murphy is a colored woman who prepares the suppers for the Indianapolis Portfolio Club. One evening this winter she asked if one of the committee members could let her have a safety pin. Some minutes later another of the committee commented on the fact that Lucille seemed able to peel and cut up the onions without any discomfort, and Lucille said, "I've got the safety pin between my teeth. That is the reason I asked for one. The onion goes to the eye of the safety pin instead of to my eyes." She said that the eye of a needle would do the same thing but that she preferred a safety pin!

William Henry Smith Memorial Library

Indianapolis, Indiana

(Mrs. Eva H. McIntosh tells me that she has heard that holding a match between the teeth when peeling onions is also a help.—The Editor)

### MEASURING FOR SHORT GROWTH

By C. O. TULLIS

I wonder whether readers of *Hoosier Folklore* have heard of "measuring for short growth." I should like to know more about it. This tradition seems to have been used around the Kokomo and Marion sections of the state—perhaps others.

Certain persons could measure a child who seemed stunted in growth; then some sort of ritual was done to cause the child to reach normal size.

Rensselaer, Indiana

(Can some of our readers enlighten us on the process? What exactly is done for the child who has the "short growth" or, as you may know it, "the go-backs"?—The Editor)

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Adventures of a Ballad Hunter*, John A. Lomax. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947. 302 pages. \$3.75.

*The Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* is a book to tax one's superlatives. I read it at one sitting one August night when the temperature was so high that I had a fan playing on me the whole time. I have an idea that many people will read the book at one sitting. And the book was not especially designed to be read in this manner. It is consciously episodic, but it is a wonderful book, often dramatic, often moving.

John Lomax has a sure touch for setting a scene, for filling in background details, for telling a story. The book is full of quick, vivid pictures. The story is a personal one, but it is much more than a personal story. It contains many stories—of song collecting; of cowboys; of certain songs, of Negroes in penitentiaries, in work gangs, in their own homes; of mountain singers; canallers; of sea chanteys; and many more. It is the story of hard work, disappointment, thrilling discovery, and triumph.

In a most readable preface Mr. Lomax says:

All my life I have been interested in the songs of the people—the intimate poetic and musical expression of unlettered people, from which group I am directly sprung. In my boyhood we sang songs around our fireside on winter evenings in a home where the library consisted of *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Bible. At work and at play folk songs were my mental food. I began early to set down the words; later the music also. And now the Library of Congress houses records of more than ten thousand tunes placed there by my son, Alan, and myself. . . .

The reader will find herein no theories about ballad origins or parallels. That task is for others. I have merely taken some pictures from my files and rearranged them in story form.

In the first four chapters, "Boyhood in Bosque," "College," "Hunting Cowboy Songs," and "Twenty Years Interim," the personal story of Mr. Lomax looms larger than in the rest of the book. The remainder deals mainly with the actual collec-



tion of the songs and with the background of the collecting. The texts of many of the songs are included also. There is, however, a personal thread running throughout the book. One of the most interesting sections to me was a series of excerpts from letters, written to friends during collecting expeditions for material for *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (115-127). These are on-the-spot personal accounts of how he and his son, Alan, lived and worked. A listing of the remaining eight chapters gives an idea of the scope of the book: "American Ballads and Folk Songs," "Penitentiary Negroes," "Iron Head and Clear Rock," "Alabama Red Land," "Burials, Baptizings and a Penitentiary Sermon," "Chanteys, Ballads, Work Songs and Calls," "Some Interesting People," "Melodies and Memories."

The story of Mr. Lomax's early ballad collecting—how he burned his first collection after being told by an English professor at the University of Texas that the songs were "tawdry, cheap, and unworthy," how he was later encouraged by Barrett Wendell and George Lyman Kittredge of Harvard, and how for years he fought an almost losing fight for recognition of the beauty and value of the American folk song—is too well-known to need further summary here. Mr. Lomax tells the story well. It is surprising how much of the history of the collecting of American folk songs is included in Mr. Lomax's story.

Indiana University

Ernest W. Baughman

*Folk Songs of Old Vincennes*, edited by Cecilia Ray Berry.  
Chicago: H. T. Fitzsimons Company, 1946. 95 pages. \$2.00.

Sometime around the year 1727, Francois-Marie Bissot, Sieur de Vincennes and a native of Montreal, founded by royal commission a trading post which for many years was known to the French simply as *le poste du Ouabache* and to Anglo-Americans (since the French spoke merely of going "*au poste*") as *Opost*. It is in honor of the sesquicentennial of the capture and annexation of that trading post, known today as Vincennes, Indiana, by the United States of America that Cecilia Ray Berry has edited *Folk Songs of Old Vincennes*, a collection of thirty-eight French folk songs of all types.

The volume is the work of many hands. The general editor, Cecilia Ray Berry, "collected and harmonized" the melodies.



Anna C. O'Flynn, principal of the old "Frenchtown" grade school in Vincennes, collected the texts which were in turn translated into English by Frederic Burget and Libushka Bartusek. Professor Joseph Medard Carrière contributed an introduction to the whole and head- and tail-notes to each song. The result is a book of more popular than scholarly appeal, but a book well worth examination by anyone interested in the folklore of the United States.

It is to be regretted that the notes to each song are not more complete than they are. For example, there appears to be no recognition of the fact that *La Chanson des Métamorphoses* (pp. 42-43) and *J'ai fait une maîtresse* (pp. 64-65) are but different variants, at least so far as the texts are concerned, of the same song, and that both are very closely related to *The Fause Knight Upon the Road* (Child Ballad 3), a song which appeared dead in the British Isles when Professor Child did his collecting at the end of the nineteenth century but which has been found in at least six different texts in America in recent years. Neither is there any indication given as to whether the songs contained in the volume represent all of the French folk songs collected in Vincennes or merely a selection of some few at the whim of the editors. Lack of information of this type is an annoyance as well as a hindrance to an understanding of the importance of the book.

On the other hand, Mr. Burget points out in the preface that "The purpose of publishing these songs is to perpetuate in some manner the folk lore of the oldest French territory now part of our country." The lack of scholarly apparatus, no matter how much it is regretted, by no means subtracts from this expressed purpose, a purpose which is accomplished by the well printed melodies, the carefully transcribed texts, and the admirable translations of the thirty-eight songs which appear in the volume. *Folk Songs of Old Vincennes* is a valuable contribution to the too slight library which records the non-British folklore of the United States.

Indiana University

W. Edson Richmond

# FOLKLORE NEWS

By ERNEST W. BAUGHMAN

## NEW MEXICO FOLKLORE ACTIVITIES

The New Mexico Folklore Society held its annual meeting in Santa Fe, June 28, 1947. Prof. Ralph S. Boggs, University of North Carolina, spoke on "Folklore and Folklorists" at the morning meeting, held in the Laboratory of Anthropology. Two singers of folk songs entertained at the luncheon meeting in the La Fonda Hotel. Mrs. Jenny Wells sang American mountain songs, and Arai sang European songs in Flemish, Dutch, and French. At the afternoon meeting in the Art Museum there were Indian and Spanish tales and Indian and Spanish singing. The society plans to sponsor meetings at various centers of interest over the state throughout the year.

## NEW MEXICO FOLKLORE RECORD

*The New Mexico Folklore Record*, Volume I, 1946-47, edited by Prof. T. M. Pearce, was distributed at the society meeting. This is an impressive annual publication in mimeograph form. The first volume contains forty-one pages of mainly Spanish and Indian materials. The two-dollar membership entitles one to a copy of the publication. Address: Prof. E. W. Tedlock, Secretary-Treasurer, New Mexico Folklore Society, The University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

## THE WESTERN FOLKLORE CONFERENCE

The Western Folklore Conference was held July 10 to 12, at the University of Denver, Denver, Colorado. The conference was in charge of Prof. Levette J. Davidson, University of Denver. Papers were given by J. Frank Dobie, Louise Pound, Kate B. Carter, Velma Linford, Caroline Bancroft, and Ernest E. Leisy. There were discussions, by various participants, of current research and publication and of folklore organizations. A Western singing school was conducted each afternoon by Prof. N. L. McNeil, University of Houston.

On Friday, July 11, the Colorado Folklore Society was organized. Prof. Levette J. Davidson was elected president.

## ILLINOIS FOLKLORE SOCIETY

The Illinois Folklore Society was formed December 4, 1946, at Carbondale, Illinois, with twenty-eight charter members. The group has had three meetings in 1947.



## ILLINOIS FOLKLORE

*Illinois Folklore*, Volume I, Number 1, October, 1947, appeared in August. There are articles by Tina M. Goodwin, Grace Partridge Smith, David S. McIntosh, Lelah Allison, and Una Keeling. The magazine is most ably edited by Jesse W. Harris, Department of English, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois. Congratulations to our sister organization!

Membership, which includes a subscription to *Illinois Folklore*, is one dollar. Dues should be sent to Miss Tina M. Goodwin, 409 West Monroe Street, Carbondale, Illinois.

PROJECT FOR MICROFILMING AMERICAN NEGRO  
NEWSPAPERS TO 1900

Under a grant from the General Education Board the Committee on Negro Studies of the American Council of Learned Societies has sponsored a project for locating and microfilming files of American Negro newspapers from the earliest date down to 1900. The project is directed by Dr. Armistead S. Pride, Director of the School of Journalism at Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri. The Library of Congress is cooperating in the project by doing most of the work of getting the files ready for the microfilm cameras and doing the actual photographing, and by supplying positive copies of the microfilms to institutions and persons desiring to purchase them. The project has located, in the collections of 70 institutions and individuals scattered throughout the country, files of 250 Negro newspapers established in the United States during the 19th century. These files are expected to total 120,000 pages which will be reproduced in approximately 172 100-foot rolls of microfilm. About half of the work has been completed. The film already made, representing about 60,000 newspaper pages, can be had for about \$600 complete. They may be secured from the Photoduplication Service of the Library.

It is hoped later to publish a list of all the newspapers copied in the program, with a key showing the libraries in which each is located.

The newspapers copied to date include the following:

*Washington Bee* (Washington, D. C., 1882-1922)

*Colored American* (Washington, D. C., 1894-1900)

*Washington Leader* (Washington, D. C., 1889-1890)



- New York Freeman* (New York, N. Y., 1884-1887)  
*New York Globe* (New York, N. Y., 1883-1884)  
*New York Age* (New York, N. Y., 1887-1900)  
*Indianapolis Freeman* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1888-1916)  
*Afro-American Sentinel* (Omaha, Neb., 1896-1900)  
*Enterprise* (Omaha, Neb., 1895-1898)  
*Iowa Bystander* (Des Moines, Iowa, 1896-1900)  
*Louisianian* (New Orleans, La., 1870-1887)  
*La Tribune de la Nouvelle-Orleans* (1864-1870), daily newspaper printed half in English, half in French  
*L'Union* (New Orleans, La., 1862-1864), predecessor of *La Tribune*  
*Huntsville Gazette* (Huntsville, Ala., 1881-1894)  
*Portland New Age* (Portland, Ore., 1899-1907)  
*Richmond Planet* (Richmond, Va., 1885-1900)  
*Cleveland Gazette* (Cleveland, O., 1883-1945)  
*Broad Ax* (Chicago, Ill., 1895-1927)  
*Wisconsin Weekly Advocate* (Milwaukee, Wis., 1898-1906)  
*Trenton Sentinel* (Trenton, N. J., 1882-1884)  
*People's Advocate* (Washington, D. C., 1876-1886)  
*Illinois Record* (Springfield, Ill., 1897-1900)  
*Ram's Horn* (New York, N. Y., 1847)  
*Pine and Palm* (Boston, Mass., 1862)  
*Colored Tennessean* (Nashville, Tenn., 1865)  
*Pioneer Press* (Martinsburgh, W. Va., 1890)  
*Golden Rule* (Vicksburg, Miss., 1900)  
*Ohio Falls Express* (Louisville, Ky., 1891)  
*Black Republican* (New Orleans, La., 1865)  
*Charleston Advocate* (Charleston, S. C., 1867)  
*Rights of All* (New York, N. Y., 1829)  
*Colored American* (Cincinnati, O., 1866)  
*South Carolina Leader* (Charleston, S. C., 1865)
- Information and Publications Office      Library of Congress

#### NOTICE OF WORK IN PROGRESS

The Committee on Research in Folklore, of the American Folklore Society, annually publishes in *The Journal of American Folklore* a list of folklore projects which are in progress. The writing of books, monographs, special studies, library research, and field collecting are included. Folklorists are requested to send information on their current activities to Herbert Halpert, Murray State Teachers College, Murray, Ky.

The Committee on Research in Folklore

### ANNUAL MEETING

The tenth annual meeting of the Hoosier Folklore Society was held Saturday, August 15, at the Union Building, Bloomington, Indiana.

President Margaret Sweeney opened the meeting and appointed a nominating committee to report at the evening session. This committee included Mrs. Ross Hickam, Miss Nellie M. Coats, and Mrs. Clara Mae Mathely.

The afternoon program was as follows:

"Visiting Other Folklore Societies," Ernest W. Baughman, Indiana University.

"A Collection of Folk Song Recordings made in Jeffersonville, Indiana," Miss Margaret Sweeney, Jeffersonville, Indiana. Recordings played were "The Butcher Boy" and Child Ballads Nos. 20, 40, and 84, most of which were sung by Mrs. Shope, of Jeffersonville.

"Techniques in Storytelling," William Hugh Jansen, Indiana University.

"The Relation of Iraqi Literature to Folklore," Nahidh Jadir, Iraq.

"The Indiana State Library and Folklore Activities," Miss Nellie M. Coats, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

"The Indian Folktale: Its Formal Openings and Closings," Dr. Erminie Voegelin, Indiana University.

At the evening meeting, following the dinner, the report of the nominating committee was made to reelect the 1947 officers, in accordance with the society custom of retaining each group of officers for two years. The officers for 1948 will be:

President: Miss Margaret Sweeney  
Vice-President: Miss Nellie M. Coats  
Secretary-Treasurer: Mrs. William Hugh Jansen  
Editor: Ernest W. Baughman  
Associate Editor: William Hugh Jansen  
Regional Editor: David S. McIntosh  
Regional Editor: Ivan Walton

Following the election of officers, Mr. Herbert Halpert gave a program of English and American folk songs, with the audience aiding in several of the refrains. There were songs

also by Mr. and Mrs. David S. McIntosh, by Nahidh Jadir, and by Dean John W. Ashton.

The address of the evening was given by Dean John W. Ashton, Indiana University, on the subject, "The Vitality of American Folklore."

Following the program, the secretary of the society was delegated to write a report of the meeting to Dr. Stith Thompson, now in Caracas, Venezuela. The members present affixed their signatures to the letter, which was written on the original stationery of the Hoosier Folklore Society.

The Editor

## HOW MANY MORE SHOPPING DAYS UNTIL CHRISTMAS?

This suggestion may seem early, but the December number will probably not reach you in time to carry the announcement. The suggestion is that you give memberships in the Hoosier Folklore Society for Christmas this year.

There are always those people difficult to buy gifts for. There are those people on whom you may not want to spend more than two dollars. Then there are those people for whom you may not want to buy anything, but for whom you feel you must buy something. Then there are those people who don't need anything and who probably wouldn't use the usual gimcracks if they got them. And then, most important of course, are those people for whom *Hoosier Folklore* would be a genuine pleasure.

If you feel that two dollars is not enough to spend on a certain person, you can give a two- or three-year membership. In giving *Hoosier Folklore*, you can be reasonably certain that your gift will not be duplicated by three or four other people.

In fact there seems to be any number of reasons why *Hoosier Folklore* is a fine idea for a Christmas gift.

And remember the combined offer of *Hoosier Folklore* and *The Journal of American Folklore*—only five dollars!

Give yourself a Christmas present too.

Address: Mrs. Wm. Hugh Jansen  
729 East Hunter  
Bloomington, Indiana



## MEMBERSHIP IN THE HOOSIER FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Membership in the Hoosier Folklore Society is two dollars a calendar year. This is open to individuals, schools, and libraries anywhere in the United States. Members receive HOOSIER FOLKLORE, a quarterly for the publication of folklore of Indiana and neighboring states. Single copies may be purchased for fifty cents each.

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## JOINT MEMBERSHIP IN HOOSIER FOLKLORE SOCIETY AND AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY

Joint membership in the Hoosier Folklore Society and the American Folklore Society is available at a special rate of five dollars a year to Indiana residents and to Indiana schools and libraries. Individual members receive HOOSIER FOLKLORE, THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE and MEMOIRS OF THE AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY as issued.

Institutional members (schools and libraries) receive HOOSIER FOLKLORE and THE JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE.

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Applications for membership and membership dues for 1947 should be mailed promptly to Mrs. William Hugh Jansen, Treasurer, Hoosier Folklore Society, 729 E. Hunter, Bloomington, Indiana.

Members are urged to secure new members for the society and to contribute manuscripts for publication.

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## STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS OF PERIODICALS REFERRED TO IN NOTES AND ARTICLES

CFQ =CALIFORNIA FOLKLORE QUARTERLY  
HF =HOOSIER FOLKLORE  
HFB =HOOSIER FOLKLORE BULLETIN  
JAFL=JOURNAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLORE  
MAFS=MEMOIRS OF THE AMERICAN FOLKLORE SOCIETY  
NYFQ=NEW YORK FOLKLORE QUARTERLY  
SFQ =SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY